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BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL

Report To The Honorable

Sam Nunn

Member, Committee On Armed Services

OF THE UNITED STATES

COMPLETED
ORIGINAL

Recruiting Malpractice: Extent, Causes, And Potentials For Improvement

SUMMARY

Malpractice is perceived by many recruiting personnel to be a problem, mostly in the Active Force components, particularly the Marine Corps. Types of malpractice thought to be occurring range from violating minor administrative regulations to downplaying of arrest records and drug problems and misleading of applicants about the military.

Most instances of malpractice are attributed to pressure to meet [illegible] recruiting personnel believe that [illegible] unnecessary administrative and processing responsibilities would be the most effective action to counter malpractice.

The Secretary of Defense should direct the services to periodically measure, on an anonymous basis, the incidents and causes of recruiting malpractice and should use the results of these surveys in making oversight reviews.

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COMPTROLLER GENERAL'S REPORT
TO THE HONORABLE SAM NUNN
MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON ARMED
SERVICES, UNITED STATES SENATE

RECRUITING MALPRACTICE: EXTENT, CAUSES, AND POTENTIALS FOR IMPROVEMENT

D I G E S T

This report is based on a questionnaire survey of Armed Forces recruiting personnel in all services--Active, National Guard, and Reserve. Survey results show the perceptions of recruiters, noncommissioned officer supervisors, and commanding officers on

--the extent of malpractice within the respective service recruiting programs;

--possible causes for these actions; and

--probable corrective actions.

GAO made this study in response to a request of Senator Sam Nunn, while Chairman of the Subcommittee on Manpower and Personnel, Senate Committee on Armed Services, who was concerned about the adequacy of service actions to control malpractice. Investigations in 1978 and 1979 determined that recruiting malpractice problems did occur in the Marine Corps and the Army.

Overall, GAO surveyed personnel in seven separate recruiting programs. The highest perceived level of malpractice is within the Marine Corps program, followed in descending order by the Army, Army National Guard, Navy, Air Force, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard.

TYPES OF MALPRACTICE

Of the 25 specific types of malpractice (see app. I, question 15) GAO studied, service personnel perceived the following as the most recurring:

Marine Corps--(1) inadequate or improper high school graduation verification, (2) counseling

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to downplay the seriousness of, or to deny, police or arrest records, (3) counseling to downplay the seriousness of, or to not report, medical problems, (4) misleading applicants about service conditions or benefits, (5) misleading applicants about which assignments or schools are available or for which they are qualified, and (6) incorrect recording of the number of school years completed. (See pp. 6 to 9.)

Army--misleading applicants about service conditions or benefits. (See pp. 9 to 11.)

Navy--counseling to downplay or deny drug usage. (See pp. 11 to 13.)

Air Force--overly sympathetic waivers for police records and no verification of police records. (See pp. 12 and 15 to 19.)

REASONS FOR MALPRACTICE

Most respondents believed that the major reason for malpractice was difficult goals or quotas. The desire to help applicants was the next most frequent reason given. (See pp. 17 to 18.)

The consensus of respondents in general was that officers in charge were committed to minimizing malpractice, that being relieved of duty was likely if one was caught committing malpractice, and that the way quotas were met was more important than meeting the quotas. However, on the last issue, many recruiters felt the emphasis was on meeting quotas rather than on how they were met. (See pp. 18 to 19.)

Few respondents felt that awareness of malpractice extended beyond recruiters, and most believed the likelihood of detecting malpractice was low. (See p. 18.) Most respondents rated those enlistees entering the services under dubious circumstances as equally qualified to other recruits. (See pp. 19 and 20.)

POSSIBLE CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

The respondents were asked to evaluate the likely success of specific corrective actions.

The most frequently endorsed corrective action was reducing or eliminating unnecessary recruiter administrative and processing responsibilities. (See pp. 20 to 21.)

RESPONDENTS' COMMENTS

The written comments of recruiting personnel concerned such things as

--the need to return to a draft,

--the impact of pressure to meet quotas,

--a questioning of the need for various enlistment standards and requirements, and

--the negative effect of recruiting duty on a recruiter's financial status and family life. (See p. 23.)

CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of perceptions of the survey respondents, malpractice is still a problem in every service component, except the Air National Guard. The types of problems and the extent varied by service component, but there were some predominant trends. Respondents identified pressure placed on recruiters to meet difficult quotas as being the cause of much of the malpractice; they suggested that changes in enlistment standards and administration and processing responsibilities could help correct current problems.

GAO believes respondents' views may provide useful insights into the extent and causes of recruiting malpractices that can be used to reduce malpractice. Further, GAO believes this information can be used as a baseline to measure improvements over time.

GAO has shared its analyses and detailed results with the services so they can use the information for these purposes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense (1) use the results of our work to assess actions the services have taken to correct recruiting malpractice, (2) direct the services to periodically measure, on an anonymous basis, the incidents and causes of recruiting malpractice, using our current data base as a baseline, and (3) use the survey results in making oversight reviews.

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At Senator Nunn's request, GAO did not obtain official comments from the Department of Defense.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFEES	Armed Forces Entrance and Examination Stations
ASVAB/ACB	Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery/Army Classification Battery
GAO	General Accounting Office
GS	General Schedule
NCO	Noncommissioned officer
NCOICs	Noncommissioned officers in-charge
RINCs	Recruiters in-charge
MEPCOM	Military Enlistment Processing Command